Department of Planning and Community Development

INTERIM DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR LARGE FORMAT RETAIL PREMISES

Victoria
The Place To Be

**Department of Planning
and Community Development**

INTERIM DESIGN GUIDELINES

FOR LARGE FORMAT RETAIL PREMISES

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FOREWORD

The Victorian Government strongly protects and improves the liveability of our towns and cities through planning policies and guidelines. Good design is even more relevant when large-scale retailing precincts or shops become part of the built environment.

A new type of retailing commonly known as "bulky goods retailing" has grown in popularity over the past decade or so. Defined in planning legislation as "Restricted Retail Premises", this type of retailing has rapidly become a major contributor to Victoria's retail economy and now accounts for 20% of national retail expenditure.

These design guidelines for Large Format Retail Premises have been prepared to assist investors, designers, planners and councils to produce premises that respond much better to their settings, customers and the environment. Part of a series of guidelines published by the Victorian Government to raise the bar for urban design in our towns and cities, the Large Format Retail Premises design guidelines provide design suggestions in relation to urban context, equitable access, public amenity and environmental sustainability.

As Minister for Planning, I'm committed to working with developers on innovative ways to optimise the benefits of their developments for sustainable, healthy communities. I'm confident these guidelines will help create the types of communities Victorians expect and deserve.

JUSTIN MADDEN MLC
Minister for Planning

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of these Guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared to assist councils, designers, and developers to

- achieve well-located and designed new large format retail premises (as defined in planning schemes) in or on the edge of activity centres

- when creating new activity centres with a large format retail component

- any new trade supplies premises.

In the case of developments in activity centres reference to the Activity Centre Design Guidelines (DSE, April 2005) should also be made.

Large Format Retail Premises are a significant and growing component of the retail market in Victoria and the other Australian states. They can differ from other forms of retailing with regard to:

- servicing requirements including carparking and deliveries
- display requirements
- patronage patterns
- consequent impacts on the size and format of developments

Restricted retail premises are often located on large prominent sites near main roads which have access to regional catchments of customers. They tend to sell large, bulky items such as furniture and thus are visited periodically rather than for everyday shopping. Many trade supplies premises also seek large sites. Out of centre locations for restricted retail premises are not encouraged, but may be permitted in circumstances set out in planning schemes.

Some developments have demonstrated poor levels of public amenity and do not adequately address such issues as access for all users or environmentally sustainable design.

The scale of the premises used for these forms of retailing is often larger than other retailing and so their impact on the local area can be considerable. For instance the large scale of the building and surrounding delivery and parking areas and the traffic generated at peak shopping times can intrude visually and physically on the neighbourhood. Large new stores in locations outside activity centres can also have an economic impact on the wider area, and if poorly located may result in a decline in access to shopping for those without cars.

Premises located away from centres promote dependence on unsustainable levels of private car use for access. Clause 12 of the *State Planning Policy Framework* and *Melbourne 2030* emphasise the need to integrate land uses and transport to reduce the costs to the community for longer and more frequent car trips.

Building to the street frontage and punctuating the frontage with clearly designated entrances attracts customers, animates the street and reinforces visual continuity in the street.

The State Planning Policy Framework, at clause 19.03, sets out design considerations that must be taken into account in the design of urban spaces and buildings. These design principles include context; public realm; landmarks; views and vistas; pedestrian spaces; heritage; consolidation of sites and empty sites; light and shade; energy and resource efficiency; architectural quality; and landscape architecture. The Guidelines have been developed to assist planners and designers in applying these design considerations.

The Guidelines provide 'best practice' design advice for restricted retail premises and trade supplies premises to promote high quality public and private amenity and good design, to assist:

- Developers and designers when developing proposals and preparing applications
- Councils when assessing proposals
- Councils and businesses in making improvements to the performance of existing premises and planning new precincts

The Guidelines are structured around four elements of design consideration:

- Urban context
- Equitable access
- Public amenity
- Environmental sustainability

Under each element is a series of general design objectives. Each objective has a corresponding set of related Design Suggestions (DS) that will generally achieve a good design response. There are also Design Requirements (DR) for site analysis and design response that must accompany any town planning application for these types of development.

Designers will need to determine the merit of the specific suggestions in the context of their proposed development and the objectives in these Guidelines. Where designers consider a Design Suggestion should not apply, they should be able to express clear reasons why this is so and put forward alternative ways of meeting the objective.

These guidelines may also provide assistance for the design and assessment of other large format retail premises.

DESIGN AIMS FOR LARGE FORMAT RETAIL PREMISES

The increasing role that these types of developments play in the life of the community warrants that their function and appearance should emphasise public and civic values, as well as any economic role. The application of these Guidelines will seek to achieve the following outcomes for Large Format Retail Premises:

- Develop a good quality external environment.
- Ensure public spaces are comfortable and engaging for all users.
- Enhance the contribution to public spaces that surrounding buildings make, by encouraging thoughtful, context-sensitive architectural design in new restricted retail premises and trade supply premises.
- Improve pedestrian and cycling amenity, and encourage an increase in pedestrian and cycling traffic by maximising the convenience, safety and appeal of these modes of travel.
- Better integrate public transport with restricted retail premises by increasing public accessibility, safety and comfort.
- Increase accessibility and integration.
- Ensure restricted retail developments are accessible to all and are physically integrated with their surrounding context.
- To improve safety and promote the natural surveillance of public space and street activity. This can be achieved by ensuring buildings address streets and other public spaces, and contain active uses on the ground floor.
- Encourage environmental sustainability.
- Promote the efficient re-use of existing assets, prolong the life cycle of structures, ensure energy efficiency, water and resource conservation and encourage appropriate use of materials.

RELATED GUIDELINES

Reference should also be made to the following design guidelines:

Activity Centre Design Guidelines, 2005

Safer Design Guidelines, 2005

New buildings should complement existing street setbacks and reinforce the street edge

ELEMENT 1 URBAN CONTEXT

Why is this important?

The term 'urban context' refers to the broader setting of a development – including the existing physical surroundings, the social and economic environment, and the area's preferred future form and function. One key aspect of urban context is understanding local character – how the features of an area come together to make a particular place distinctive. All new development should make a positive contribution to an area's character, either existing or preferred, by protecting and contributing to the valued natural, built and community qualities. However a second key aspect of the urban context is how the area is changing, or is likely to change over time. Strategic planning for an area may have identified the place as one that is likely to change over time, for instance to serve a growing population.

The context for these types of developments can vary and so it is important that it be seriously analysed.

A comprehensive understanding and appreciation of context – balancing local character and strategic planning objectives – must be the starting point for any design. This requires an understanding of a proposed development and its contribution to its surrounding public setting and neighbouring properties, and to any identified strategic issues relating to the site.

When considering local character it is important to understand the urban context of the location. For example, out-of-centre roadside locations will have a very different character when compared with an activity centre in an urban environment. Designers should consider both the impacts and the contributions of their proposal with regard to local character, particularly if that is an area in need of improvement.

Objective 1.1: To achieve buildings and public spaces which respond appropriately to the existing context and to agreed vision for the area's development.

SITE ANALYSIS

DR 1.1.1: Ensure the location of the site is consistent with or implements any objective, policy, strategy or plan for the area set out in the planning scheme.

DR 1.1.2: Identify the planning scheme objectives and requirements applicable to the site or area in a design response.

DR 1.1.3: Prepare a site analysis that documents the character of the area and identifies opportunities and constraints of the site. Use the report to generate and test options as part of the design process.

A site analysis will generally include:

• information on the site and neighbouring buildings.

• an assessment of local character acknowledging its effects on possible design options.
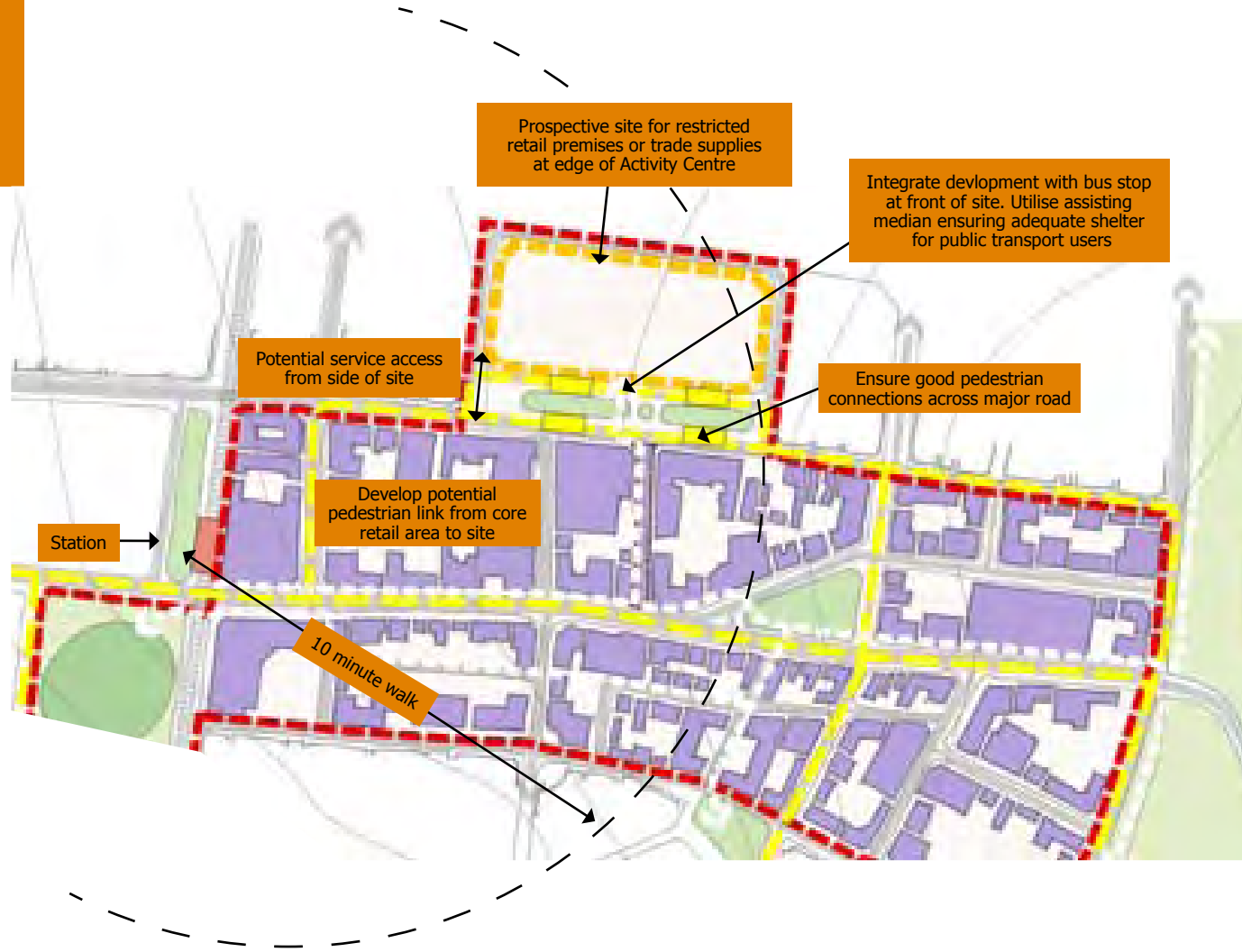
While site analyses must be thorough in their identification and assessment of issues requiring an appropriate design response, they will vary in their content and detail depending on the complexity of the site and proposal.

The site analysis and design response may use plans, photographs or other techniques and should accurately describe the physical characteristics of the site and its surrounding context including man-made and natural elements, subdivision pattern, built form, movement and access, and social or cultural patterns.

The assessment of character should explain the pattern of development in the area and its salient features rather than simply presenting a list of unrelated facts or measurements.

DS 1.1.4: Consider how the development will integrate with, and impact upon existing and future uses nearby.

DS 1.1.5: Use the site analysis and design response as the basis for pre-application discussions with the responsible authority about the site and the design.

Prospective site for restricted retail premises or trade supplies at edge of Activity Centre

Integrate devlopment with bus stop at front of site. Utilise assisting median ensuring adequate shelter for public transport users

Potential service access from side of site

Ensure good pedestrian connections across major road

Develop potential pedestrian link from core retail area to site

Station

10 minute walk

Movement

Legend

- Waterfront
- Study Area
- Development Area
- Railway
- Bus Route/Shuttle Bus
- Major Pedestrian Links
- Proposed Road Closure - Potential Pedestrian Link & Civic Square
- Public Open Space - Passive
- Public Open Space - Active

A site analysis should show opportunities and constraints on and around the site. Separating the diagrams of the built form and the movement network helps indicate the access needs generated by the proposed development and its proximity to public transport.

Provide parking to rear of site to maintain street edge

Manage interface issues with adjacent residential development

Locate front doors opposite pedestrian crossings

Ensure active street interface along frontage of site - possible cafe or small scale shops

Match existing street setback

Built Form

Legend

Waterfront

Study Area

Development Area

Railway

Building - Single Storey

Building - Two Storey

Building - Three Storey

Public Open Space - Passive

Public Open Space - Active
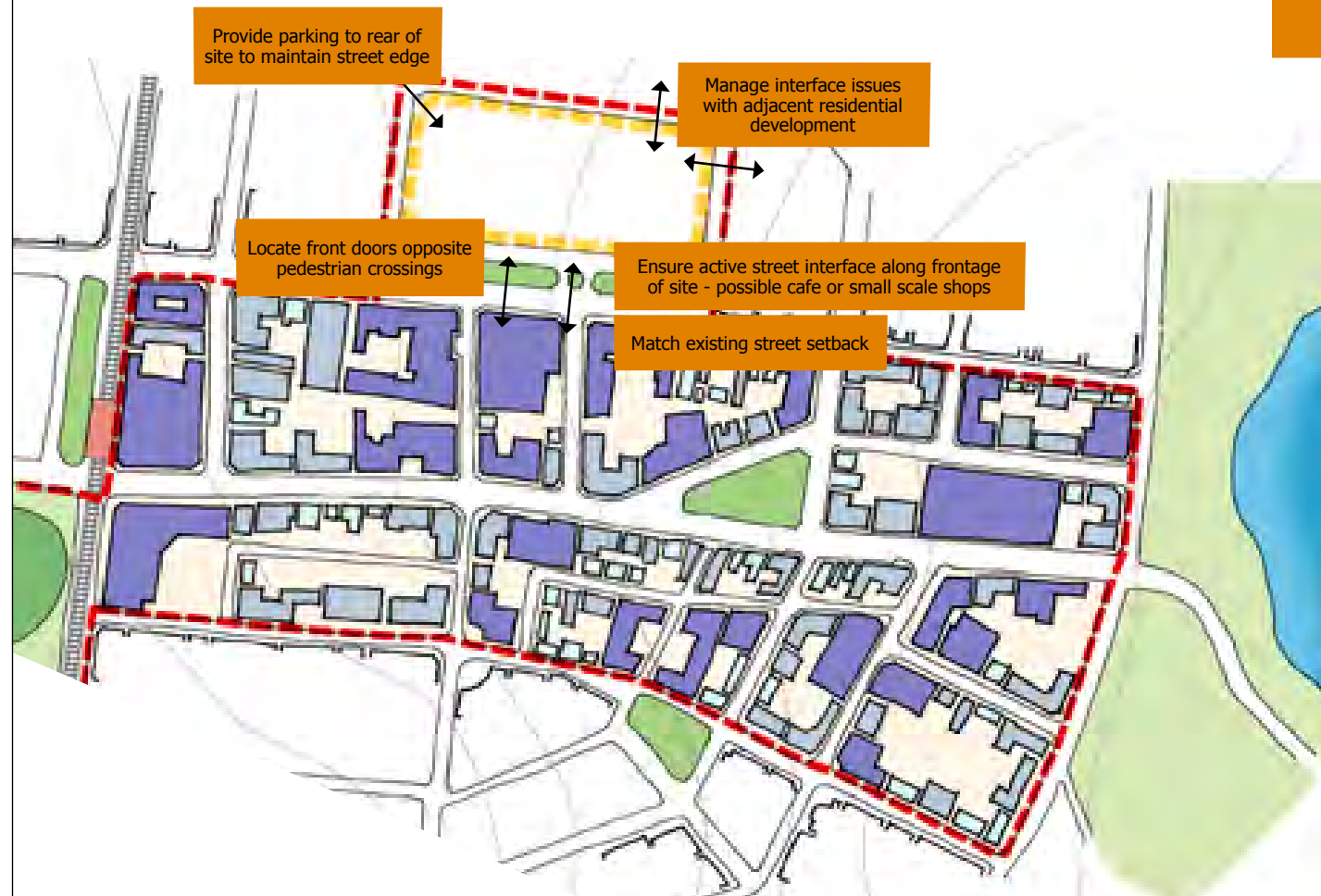
Articulated facades, pedestrian shelter and active street frontages create visual interest and attract passing trade.

ELEMENT 1 URBAN CONTEXT

Wrapping or capping large format retail premises with smaller units can provide active and attractive streets avoiding large expanses of car parking such as illustrated in the top diagram.

**Objective 1.2: To promote high quality urban design and architecture that responds to SPPF Clause 19.03**

DS 1.2.1   Assess the design response against the design principles of VPP Clause 19.03.

There may be opportunity to create or reinforce a sense of place and a recognisable identity through design, for instance by acknowledging a nearby physical feature or waterway, historic land use, or type of vegetation.

Objective 1.3: To integrate the built form of Large Format Retail Premises into the surrounding context

DS 1.3.1: Integrate larger store frontages with the prevailing rhythm and scale of existing frontages along streets. This can be achieved by "wrapping or capping" the larger retail unit with smaller retail units fronting the external environment

DS 1.3.2:   Provide a scale transition between large buildings and their surrounding streets and residential areas to minimise the visual bulk of developments.

DS 1.3.3:   Avoid unreasonable overshadowing of adjoining residential areas and public spaces.

DS 1.3.4:   Minimise amenity issues associated with servicing of these developments by design measures such as locating loading bays and site storage and access points for waste collection away from public spaces, streets and residential areas. Use buffer areas with appropriate landscaping to reduce visual impacts on adjoining sensitive uses.

DS 1.3.5:   Locate larger format uses adjacent to rail or service corridors to lessen the amount of non-active frontage or service areas presented.

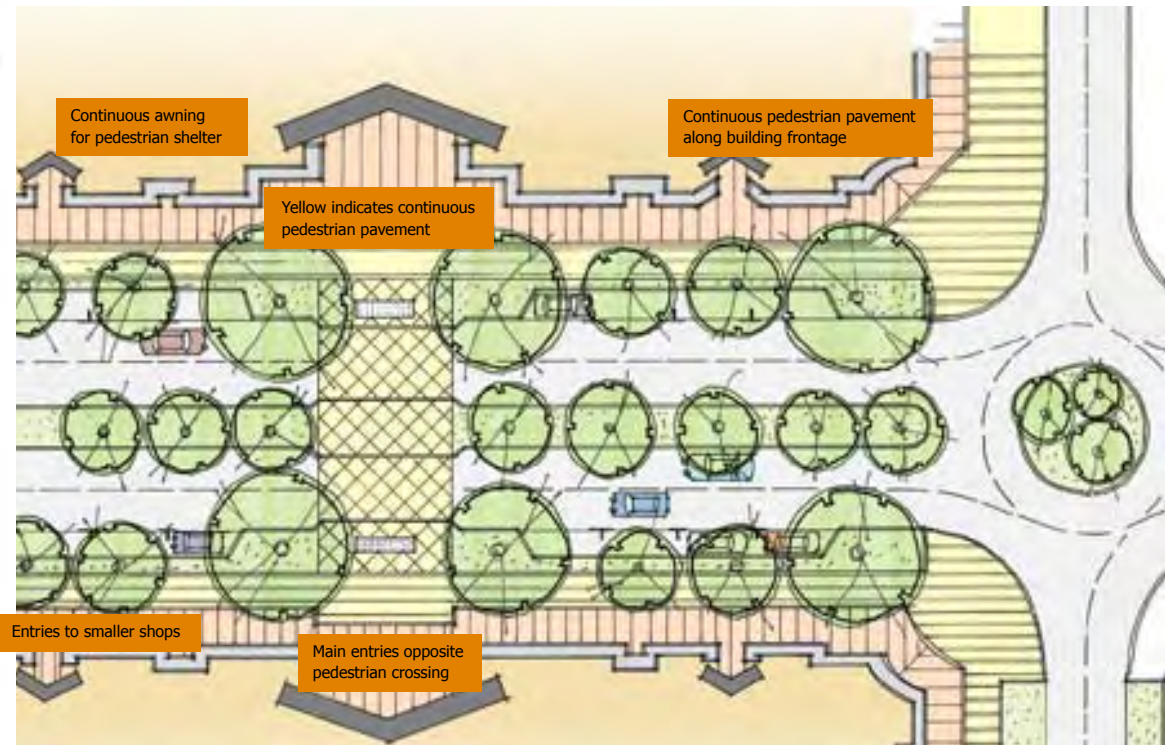DS 1.3.6:   Provide a management plan for any operations which will impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses.
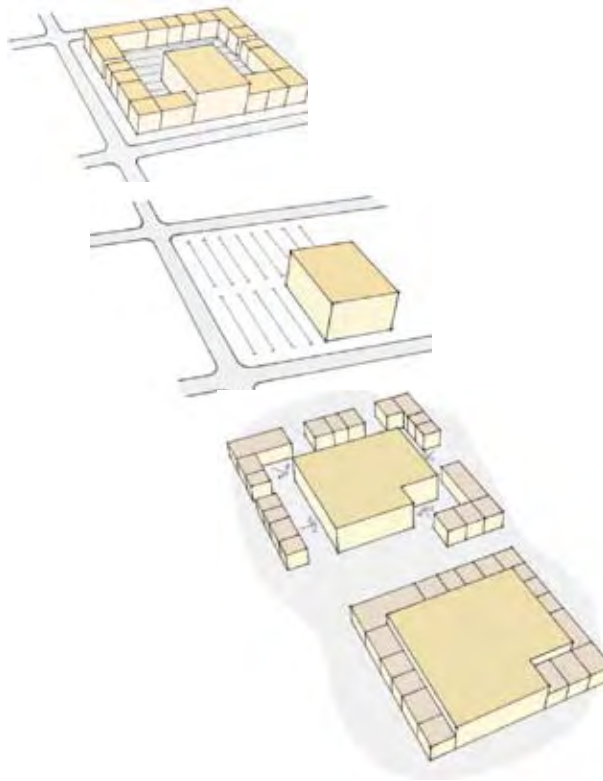
Main street

Main entry & active frontage

Service and parking to side.

Residential properties to rear
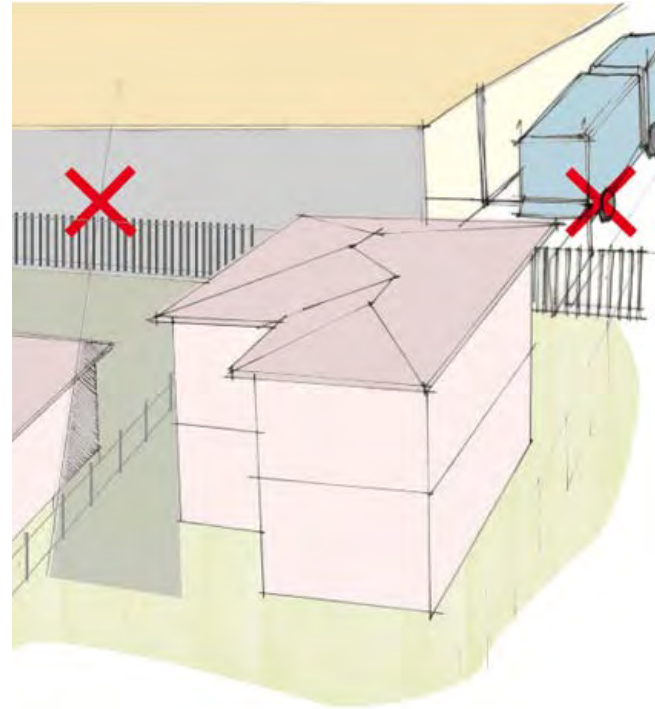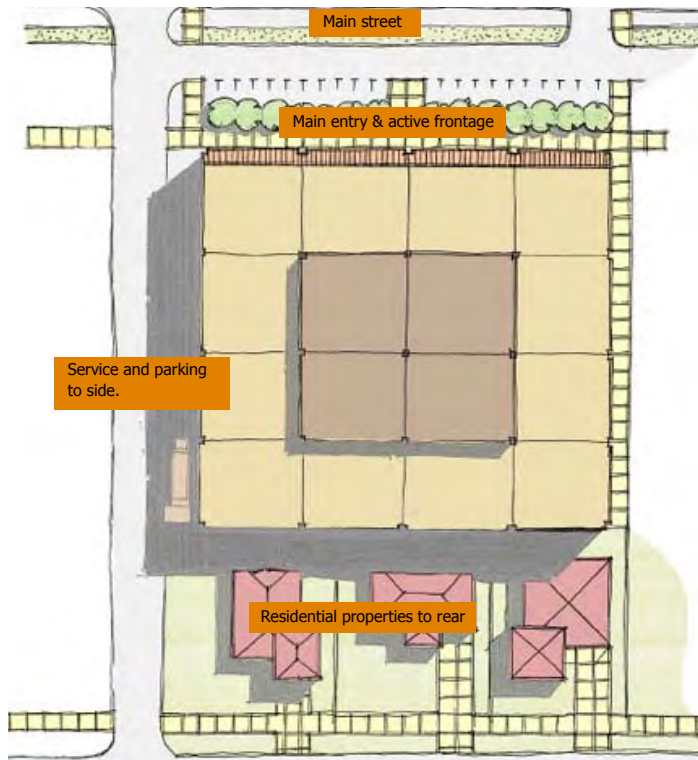
Overshadowing of residential areas should be avoided.

Adequately address amenity issues associated with proximity of developments to adjacent housing. The illustration above shows design outcomes which should be avoided, including overshadowing of private open space areas and the location of loading areas close to the residential area.

Large retail premises

Parking and landscaping separates houses from large retail premises, to minimise the impact of activity and overshadowing.

Residential area

Continuous awning for pedestrian shelter

Continuous pedestrian pavement along building frontage

Yellow indicates continuous pedestrian pavement

Entries to smaller shops

Main entries opposite pedestrian crossing

Transitions between large retail premises and neighbouring residential areas need to be carefully managed. A landscaped buffer area can help reduce overshadowing and visual impacts on neighbouring houses, and also accommodate parking.

The street environment on wide arterial roads can be designed and managed to make it more hospitable to pedestrians and cyclists including pedestrian crossings and access points. Verandahs and awnings to provide weather protection should be provided around the building facade.

Provide convenient and safe access to public transport.